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***Blood and Water: The Indus River Basin in Modern History.* By David Gilmartin. pp. 356. Oakland, California, University of California Press, 2015.**

The environmental history of South Asia is a burgeoning field. David Gilmartin is a leading proponent, and his new study of irrigation in the Indus Basin compellingly demonstrates the impact that human-driven environmental change can have on political structures. In a dry country, controlling water flows has been key to statecraft. His narrative spans from mid-nineteenth century British canal-digging to the market-driven neo-liberalisation of Pakistan's water economy during the 1990s. Gilmartin argues that changing, often conflicting visions of water-control were key to state power during and after colonial rule.

The book's unifying theme is the dynamic link between the physical and administrative structures of irrigation, on one hand, and changing notions of political community on the other. Privately-owned canals dominated Punjab in the mid-nineteenth century, but by the early twentieth century the state had developed huge canal colonies on public 'wastelands'. Groundwater extraction characterised the Green Revolution of the 1960s. Each major change to the irrigation system reformulated the relationship between bureaucrats, engineers and communities of cultivators. Increasingly, technical experts drove such changes in the name of efficiency, while governors sought ways to assert greater control over agrarian populations.

Yet this is far from a tale of unmitigated state power. Gilmartin consistently highlights contradictions between competing visions of political community in colonial policy. No less importantly, Indians themselves sought space within the system to assert their own interests. A case study of Jamal Khan, a Leghari chief settled in Punjab, shows that 'the state' was anything but unitary. Khan was able to exploit the fault-line between the colonial imperative towards engineering control of water flows, and British dependence on the 'natural' leaders of Baloch society for collaboration, to increase his own power (47-68).

The Introduction is an effective and accessible introduction both to the basin as a physical space, and the concept of 'environment' as part of political discourse. Chapter 2 puts forward a new understanding of the relationship between tribal authority in Baloch society, colonial frontier policy, and canal irrigation. British canal policy was not intended to undercut Baloch pastoral lifestyles so much as to bring Baloch into the 'moral' realm of colonial law.

During the later nineteenth century, by contrast, colonial attention turned to agricultural production on the plains. In Chapter 3, Gilmartin deploys James Scott's idea of 'state simplification' (84) to argue that the colonial legal code relied on a sharp division between 'village' land and 'wasteland'. Claiming that wastelands were economically unproductive, the state assumed ownership of them in order to promote development.

Chapter 4 argues that the Canal Act of 1873 attempted to remove 'customary' practices from local-level water control and bring the latter into the 'public' realm of statutory law. This did not necessarily lead to increased state power, however. The Tiwanas of Shahpur, for example, emerged as private 'water lords' who were 'active, transformative agents in canal development [...] but whose cultural *styles* as water managers nevertheless remained embedded in the idioms of local "tribal" community' (126).

Chapter 5 explains colonial attempts to construct an integrated network of barrage-dams and canals in western Punjab from the 1880s as a product of an engineering-based view of the Indus

Basin as a single, 'natural' hydrological system. '[T]he rise of professional, state-based engineering' (158) enabled officials to construct planned, idealized villages on wastelands. The continuing colonial belief that Indians could be most effectively governed by managing kinship ties within communities, however, limited the state's modernizing mission.

Chapter 6 shows competing Sikh and Muslim nationalisms during the 1940s came to articulate rival claims on colony land. When South Asia became independent in 1947, the Partition of Punjab divided the Indus Basin between Pakistan and northwestern India. An ensuing international dispute over water allocation, Gilmartin argues, made national rather than religious community the overriding referent in water-control policy. Chapter 7 accordingly examines the impact of the 1960 World Bank-sponsored Indus Waters Treaty, which envisaged the river basin a 'simultaneously natural and engineered entity' (220) that could be split into two separate national domains. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to demonstrating, however, that inter-provincial debates within India and Pakistan questioned the idea of a single, unitary river basin within each country.

Overall, the book originally demonstrates the durability of competing visions of nature and human community in South Asian politics. Individual chapters make particular contributions. Chapter 2, for example, places water at the heart of the growing historiographical understanding of the relationship between mountainous, 'tribal' frontier spaces and the British-controlled plains. Chapters 3 and 4 highlight the transformative role of private interests in canal policy, something that many scholars have viewed primarily as the state's domain. Chapters 6 and 7 place Partition and its aftermath, for the first time, in the context of long-term changes in the ways that officials and politicians articulated rival visions of the river basin as a hydrological system. Some material has already appeared in published articles, but the majority is new.

The work's large scope forces Gilmartin to touch only lightly on some topics. Most of the analysis focuses on developments in Punjab. Sindh, Balochistan and Rajasthan feature occasionally, but other parts of the watershed such as Khyber-Pukhtunkwa, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh are largely absent. Some details fly past rather quickly. For example, readers unfamiliar with postcolonial northwestern India might not understand a brief reference to a 1985 agreement on water distribution between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Sikh leader Sant Longorwal (225).

This is the most authoritative book on Indus Basin politics yet written. It will be of wide interest to scholars of modern South Asia, and to environmental historians more generally. Gilmartin's clear and engaging writing style is suited to a broad audience of students as well as academics.

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